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Monday, 20 November 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Huaraka (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 112 (*continued*)

Human rights questions

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Special commemorative meeting to mark the United Nations Year for Tolerance

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): As we meet today to commemorate together the end of the United Nations Year for Tolerance, I am pleased to pay a tribute to the United Nations for its efforts, under the leadership of its Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to disseminate the values of tolerance, peace, cooperation and human solidarity, noble values guaranteeing that civilizations will endure.

I am also pleased to pay a tribute to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its Director-General, Mr. Federico Mayor, for their contribution to the success of the United Nations Year for Tolerance.

For years now, humanity has witnessed the spread of terrorism, violence, confrontation, hatred and horrors, bringing tragedy and suffering for millions of human beings. It is as if the universal conscience were no longer playing its role in shaping the behaviour of individuals, communities and States or in helping us learn the lessons of the past.

It is not our intention to portray the world as a place of chaos, nor do we consider this situation immutable. We are, rather, trying to describe a reality that should spur us to rouse the world's conscience, analyse the root causes of the situation more deeply and explore the means by which we can put an end to it.

The failure of ideologies and the values they promoted, and the way in which certain communities, groups and even peoples subsequently withdrew into themselves, can hardly explain the decline in the values of tolerance. The images of violence, genocide and various forms of terrorism and extremism, broadcast by the media with surprising frequency and with no thought whatsoever for the consequences, has in turn contributed to trivializing such images in the eyes of public opinion, resulting in a certain casualness about these grave occurrences.

Today more than ever, the world needs to consecrate the value of tolerance in the fight against selfishness and apathy, replace fear with serenity and exclusion and marginalization with solidarity, both within societies and at the level of the international community.

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Tolerance is one of the essential values of our Muslim faith and our social traditions. It typifies Tunisian history, which is a living example of how differences can be absorbed in a single system of civilization.

Just as our conception of this value in our country is global, so too have we based our political, economic, social, cultural and civilizational choices on concepts deeply steeped in tolerance. We have conceived and built up relations between our people's political and social components in a dynamic spirit of reconciliation and consensus, with a view to consolidating our country's progress on the path of democracy and human rights.

We have therefore drawn up a national covenant which sums up the constant values of our civilization, values which unite us and to which the parties, the organizations and the other component parts of our civilian society have subscribed. We have also assigned to the principle of equality the importance it deserves as a socio-cultural value. To do this, we have consolidated women's gains and further developed the legislation in this area.

Youth has also had a privileged place in the plan for society that we have been building. We have promulgated a special code for the protection of children, as an addition to the countless measures and mechanisms we have established to protect children and to give concrete form to those values and norms set down in the international Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Tolerance is also the spirit of solidarity that is deeply rooted in our culture and our traditions. We have established the National Solidarity Fund with a view to enabling the vulnerable sectors of our population to live in decent conditions.

With respect to the protection of religious minorities, Tunisia — a country of openness, of civilization and of peaceful coexistence between its various minorities — has enshrined the tradition of tolerance and respect for nationalities and other religions by guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities through legislation.

Strengthened by its geographical position and by the fact that it belongs to the Arab-Muslim, Mediterranean and African region, Tunisia has been at the forefront of the countries that have stood against the manifestations of intolerance in this region and elsewhere. In respect of racial discrimination on the African continent, the Middle East conflict or the tragedy of the Bosnian people, Tunisia has always strongly defended and upheld law, justice and peace. Because we have faith in the values of tolerance, cooperation and solidarity, we have engaged in many initiatives and activities to ensure that the Mediterranean remains a lake of peace and security, a bridge uniting the two shores for the strengthening of socio-cultural exchanges and shared development of the riparian countries.

In this connection, we are particularly happy to inform the General Assembly of the recent signing between Tunisia and the European Union of the first agreement of partnership and shared development, thereby opening the road to other, similar agreements that will give concrete form to our convictions regarding peace and tolerance.

In this context, Carthage, a city with a 3,000-year-old civilization whose achievements have enlightened three continents — Africa, Europe and America — last April hosted the Mediterranean symposium on the teaching of tolerance. This meeting, co-sponsored by the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Tunisian Government, brought together a great number of philosophers, historians, sociologists and religious leaders, and affirmed the role of religions, intellectuals and media in the promotion of tolerance. This meeting also resulted in the adoption of the Carthage charter, a document which reaffirms the role of democracy and political pluralism in promoting tolerance. The charter stipulates that tolerance can be fully promoted only if economic and social inequalities, inequalities within nations and economic policies imposed from outside are attacked. The charter holds that cultural diversity should be considered to be enriching and not divisive. Democracy and freedom of thought and expression should therefore be recognized as inalienable rights about which there should be no discrimination.

I shall conclude, by quoting Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, who expressed the hope that

> "above and beyond the ceremonial, academic debate, research, the dissemination of studies and the launching of appeals, the United Nations Year for Tolerance will offer an opportunity to work out clear approaches and useful proposals to enshrine tolerance at the level of ideals and practice, and to give it concrete form in relations among individuals, groups, races, States, civilizations, religions and cultures."

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Senator Dominic Foreman, M.P. of Australia.

Mr. Foreman (Australia): Australia is one of the most multicultural of nations. We have a rich and linguistically diverse indigenous culture. Almost one-third of all Australians are themselves migrants, and they came from every continent. We have 240 different ethnic communities. Practically every modern language is spoken, and every known religion practised, in Australia.

To mark the United Nations Year for Tolerance and the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we hosted a Global Cultural Diversity Conference in Sydney in April this year. The purpose of the Conference was to consider the ways by which we might make cultural diversity less of an impediment to human progress, and more of a means to it. That is, how can different groups not merely tolerate but actually benefit from each other?

In his keynote speech at the Conference, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted that both the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established culture as a fundamental human right, and made cultural diversity a central issue in the work of the United Nations today.

The agenda for the Conference demonstrates that cultural diversity is itself a diverse concept. It calls to mind different preoccupations for different people, depending on their background. To mention a few examples, the Conference included presentations on: the international movement of labour in Asia; issues in native Canadian welfare; music as a force for social change; the intercultural nature of modern English; the competitive advantages of a culturally diverse workforce; alliances and allegiances: rebuilding South Africa; the Australian indigenous experience; building cohesion in the wake of conflict: the Palestinian perspective; biculturalism and bureaucracy in New Zealand; the lessons learned from Los Angeles; conservation of India's architectural heritage; constitutional change and political life of Fiji; diversity and domestic violence. Also, a paper entitled "And the wall came tumbling down: Berlin", was presented.

Given a Conference of this variety, the drawing of common threads must itself be hailed as an achievement in bridge-building. The Conference concluded that all societies stood to gain by being genuinely inclusive, open and progressive in their approach to cultural diversity.

National approaches to managing cultural diversity which nurtured the rich culture and linguistic traditions inherent in diverse communities would enhance the competitive position of national economies and increase international peace and security.

Government policies should facilitate access to national languages and provide equal access to education and training opportunities, the labour market and social services. Full justice for, and reconciliation with, indigenous peoples was seen as essential.

At the same time, the Conference acknowledged that diversity had to be reconciled with social cohesion — shared values and mores should be promoted. The status of women in all cultures had to continue to be advanced.

Australia hopes the ideas and experiences aired at the Cultural Diversity Conference helped raise general awareness of the question of tolerance, thereby facilitating cooperation within societies and the work of the United Nations. We hope some of the specific proposals will be carried forward, including through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Management of Social Transformation programme.

The Sydney Conference pointed to the need for further discussion on the contribution of diversity to economic development and on the unique situation of indigenous peoples. The Australian Government is encouraging other countries to consider hosting a follow-up conference or a series of seminars to continue the discussion on cultural diversity and the sharing of information and practices.

Philosophers may argue over the location in the human psyche of the instinct of intolerance for, and violence towards, those who are different. At the social level it is indisputable that intolerance of racial, religious, ethnic, language and gender differences is exploited by groups which seek to attain or maintain economic and political power over others.

At the subtle end of the spectrum is the denial which effectively disadvantages people by imposing uniform expectations and offering uniform opportunities.

At the worst extreme, each generation since the start of the Second World War has been witness to cases of deliberate genocide or that cultivated anarchy in which vulnerable groups destroy each other. The work of States

and the United Nations is to ensure through equitable development, education, and the rule of law that the pattern ceases.

Tolerance is a matter of peace and security, economic and social development and human rights. Instituting tolerance is therefore the task of a properly coordinated and reintegrated United Nations. It is thus very fitting that the conclusion of the Year be marked by the General Assembly in plenary.

Let the walls of intolerance tumble down.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Sudan.

Mr. Fad'Allah (Sudan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It gives me pleasure to address the General Assembly on this very important occasion — the Special Commemorative Meeting to mark the United Nations Year for Tolerance.

Tolerance, that concept which, of late, has been in the spotlight, did not emerge from a vacuum; rather, it is its antithesis, the phenomenon of intolerance, which is now rampant in the world, that makes us speak of tolerance. Our world is now in the grip of tensions and conflicts in all its parts and is, therefore, tortured by the manifestations of xenophobia, ethnic massacres and genocide, and disrespect for the cultures and religions of others. The blind fanaticism that is rampant in certain cultures and the attendant delusions of superiority, when added to these manifestations, underscore the vital importance of tolerance if the world is to be able to rid itself of these burning hot beds of hostility.

The world we all live in has been, from the very beginning, a world of diversity. Cultures, norms and religions have differed, from one place to the other, since time immemorial. So, what is new? What is it that makes the affliction of intolerance rampant in the world today?

The imbalance in the division of wealth, and the resultant prevalence of poverty, disease and social injustice are the principal factors that seduce certain Governments into looking down upon the peoples of other countries, seeking to impose their own cultures on other peoples and into striving, with the help of their abundant resources and might, to achieve that goal of imposing the way of life of their nations on others. In the process, peoples of different cultures or different religions or different customs and traditions are promptly branded as violators of human rights or even as terrorists or, sometimes, as fundamentalists whereas, in actual fact, it is the pressure that is brought to bear in imposing those Governments' conditions on other peoples that constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights.

Cultural differences and religious and ethnic diversity, in our view, are a source of enrichment and enlightenment for humanity as a whole.

The best example we can cite in this respect is Sudan with its head towards the North of Africa and with its South deep in the heart of Africa, with the Arab peninsula and Asia only a few steps from its East. Sudan is therefore African, Arabic, Muslim and Christian and we have a number of other local religions as well to which some of the inhabitants of our country belong. This is the best example we can use to illustrate diversity in any one country.

Sudan, throughout the ages, has remained an example of coexistence where mosques have been built alongside churches and where Moslems and Christians have worked together side by side and where tribes with their different ethnicities have lived in harmony and amity.

All those qualities have made Sudan well qualified to host two international conferences on dialogue between religions. Those conferences were held in Khartoum with the participation of religious leaders from various parts of the world. The conferences adopted recommendations that called for the peaceful coexistence of the adherents of the revealed religions which came from one and the same God.

In this respect I should like to refer to the fact that Sudan hosted a Papal visit by His Holiness Pope John Paul in 1992 and, that last October, Dr. George Kerry, the Archbishop of Canterbury, visited Sudan and toured many of its provinces. Sudan will continue to receive similar delegations and prominent personages in order for them to see at first-hand the Sudanese model.

It is also worth mentioning that the laws which prohibited proselytizing in the past have been repealed, so that all religions can proselytize freely. For the first time ever in the history of Sudan Bishop Gabriel Rusarik has been appointed Minister of State at the Foreign Ministry and our brethren, the Christians, hold very high posts such as the post of Vice-President of the Republic.

Whatever the circumstances, we now find ourselves today faced with this challenge which requires us all to transcend our differences and to broaden our horizons in order to encompass the cultures and religions of others. It is important for us all to realize that we cannot impose one culture on the whole world in complete disregard of the many other cultures that exist in that world.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway): Today the General Assembly commemorates the United Nations Year for Tolerance. It is with utmost regret that I have to take the floor to observe that the opposite of tolerance was practised a few days ago through the brutal acts committed in Nigeria. The promotion and protection of all human rights are predicated on tolerance and the rule of law. Norway condemns the execution of Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight co-defendants. Through this act Nigeria has failed to honour its commitment to human rights and a number of international instruments to which it is a party.

The United Nations Year for Tolerance coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, and this reminds us of the commitment of the United Nations founding fathers to practise tolerance. It is a matter of grave concern and a challenge to us all that half a hundred years after the signing of the United Nations Charter, the ideals and practice of tolerance are still far from having been attained in many parts of the world.

The State should be the common house for all its residents under conditions of equality and nondiscrimination. Specific guidelines are set out in the United Nations Convention on racial discrimination and in the minority rights Declaration. Together, these instruments constitute a set of minimum rules for peaceful coexistence and constructive cooperation between members of different national groups.

The rationale for the United Nations Year for Tolerance, proclaimed by the General Assembly upon an initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has the full support of my Government. Discrimination, racism, xenophobia and religious fanaticism are affronts to democratic principles and must stop. Respect for individual rights and freedoms and the acceptance of diversity contribute, on the other hand, to building just societies. In this and in other respects we join in the statement made by Spain on behalf of the European Union reaffirming our commitment to the objectives of the United Nations Year for Tolerance.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Junejo (Pakistan): The concept of tolerance has always been important for human civilization. It is the basic norm, the fundamental value, which binds human beings in relationships. The degree of tolerance can be used as a yardstick for measuring the progress and viability of any society. Divergence in the views of individuals, groups, communities, nations, countries and regional blocs is the essence of human intellect and a precondition for the growth of human civilization. Diversity in cultures, languages, philosophies of life and systems of government makes life variegated and enriches its infinite colours. It is, therefore, necessary that this diversity be protected and sustained through tolerance. Between individuals, tolerance promotes understanding; between communities, it promotes harmony; between religions, it promotes dialogue and communication; and between nations, it promotes peaceful coexistence.

In the post-cold-war era, instead of harmony and concord, we have heard echoes of clash of civilizations. There have been apprehensions that the old ideological animosities might be replaced by new forms of confrontation. We believe that the decision of the General Assembly in 1993 to designate 1995 as the United Nations Year for Tolerance was very timely. However, we feel that the run-up to the Year and its actual observance have not been spectacular events. The Year itself was eclipsed by a number of other important events which have taken place during the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary.

Universalization of basic education, improvement of the quality of education, emphasis on scientific literacy, and widening of the scope of higher learning, particularly in the developing countries, can all go a long way in reducing the impact of intolerance in our societies. The growing interdependence of the economies through international trade, joint economic ventures and regional groupings acts as a catalyst in promoting some degree of tolerance. The market-system forces, if tempered by the interventions for social justice and equity, also lay down the foundations for tolerant societies.

The international community and the United Nations have continued their search for the most effective ways to promote tolerance. The Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights all

provide the basic framework for the universal respect and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. At the international level, we have developed the consensus that the rights of freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief encompass the most important aspects of our individual and social lives. Discrimination against human beings on the grounds of their ethnic origin, linguistic background, religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity. It is tantamount to the disavowal of the principles of the Charter. We have reached agreement on guaranteeing freedoms of thought, conscience and religion. We must preserve them at all costs through tolerance and understanding.

Intolerance gives birth to violence, discrimination and exclusion. It prepares the ground for the violation of the rights to life, physical integrity and security of persons. In many parts of the world, we have seen that advocacy and practice of the doctrines based on intolerance have led to systematic torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of people. It is incumbent upon us to fight intolerance in order to root out the causes of mutually destructive strife, conflicts and wars. To banish intolerance, constitutional and legal measures alone are not enough. We must go beyond the legal provisions and combat hatred, intolerance, acts of violence, intimidation, coercion and extremism. To promote tolerance, we need the cooperation and active participation of all actors in civil society. In addition, efforts should be made to build bridges and to unite people in overlapping relationships so that tolerance and understanding become a way of life and the supreme norm for the conduct of social intercourse.

It is the responsibility of all States to protect the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. We have ample guidance on the subject in the form of the resolutions and declarations adopted by the General Assembly. Minorities are vulnerable. In many societies they cannot protect themselves. It is therefore imperative that Governments should make bold interventions and take affirmative action to protect the rights of minorities and to create favourable conditions for their full growth and development. The relationship of minorities with other sections of society should not be viewed in a negative perspective. Due recognition should be given to their contribution to peace and security, stability and national culture.

In Pakistan, determined efforts have been made to inculcate the values of tolerance to promote harmony among various sections of society. The Constitution of Pakistan proclaims the inviolability of the dignity of man and guarantees freedoms of speech, association, assembly and movement. Article 25(1) declares that all citizens are equal and entitles them to equal protection. The Constitution also declares that there should be no discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth. The State also protects the rights and interests of minorities, including their due representation in the legislatures and federal and provincial services.

Minorities in Pakistan are equal citizens. The father of our nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, proclaimed in his inaugural speech 48 years ago that all citizens of Pakistan are equal. That proclamation of the Quaid-e-Azam remains an article of faith in our nation today. To protect the rights of minorities, special seats have been reserved in the national Parliament and in the national and provincial services. Our political, social, economic and cultural life is enriched by the contributions of parliamentarians, judges, academics, legists, political leaders and civil servants belonging to minorities.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, has personally spearheaded the campaign for the promotion and protection of human rights in Pakistan. We believe that the protection of human rights in Pakistan is essential for encouraging tolerance, strengthening democratic institutions, fostering national unity and invigorating socio-economic development.

The Government and a large number of representatives of civil society are striving to strengthen the forces of moderation and tolerance in Pakistan. We are conscious that in order to achieve this objective, we will have to address the causes of underdevelopment and illiteracy. The Government's entire machinery is geared towards stemming intolerance. Despite heavy odds, we are determined to pursue the goals of tolerance, equality, peaceful coexistence and egalitarianism.

In recent years, we have seen instances of minorities being denigrated and, on the slightest excuse, being dubbed extremists, their businesses destroyed and their holy places and shrines desecrated. Instead of respecting the separate identities of minorities and providing them full opportunities for growth, some States have abetted pogroms of religious minorities, organized massacres and instigated the disfigurement of their religious icons. The abhorrent caste system continues to plague the lives of hundreds of millions of people and blocks their

development in the social, economic and cultural fields. It is ironical that in our times the perpetrators of these excesses talk about tolerance in order to hide their real face and to maintain a sanctimonious façade of respectability. If we are to promote a culture based on tolerance and mutual understanding, we will have to tackle the forces of duplicity, deceit and dissimulation.

In recent years, we have also seen attempts by some countries to forcibly assimilate the peoples under their occupation by declaring them to be minorities. After crushing their right to self-determination, they accuse them of intolerance because they are asking for their freedom. This is a gross distortion and violation of the principles of the Charter.

Tolerance is a positive value. It should not be used for propaganda or for hiding negative acts, such as the suppression of the right of peoples to self-determination. Tolerance should not be used as a subterfuge to justify violations of international humanitarian law. Tolerance does not mean acquiescence to gross and consistent violations of human rights. It should not be used as a stratagem to negate the consensus of the international community on promoting and protecting human rights all over the world. The sacred concept of tolerance should not be used as a means to protect repressive Governments' "prerogative" to brutalize people under any pretext.

We should not allow tolerance to be indirectly misused to scuttle the consensus on the universality of human rights reached at Vienna. For those who do so, this would be tantamount to saying,

> "We will continue to do whatever we want to. We will continue to violate human rights with impunity. International censure in this respect is an interference in our internal affairs. Tolerate our crimes against humanity."

That would be the queerest interpretation and application of the concept of tolerance.

Today, as we conclude the observance of the United Nations Year for Tolerance, we must resolve to pursue the goal of tolerance, coexistence and cooperation with absolute sincerity and transparency. Tolerance is a powerful instrument for promoting cooperation. It should not be used as a tool for sowing discord.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Ziauddin (Bangladesh): It is timely and appropriate, during this fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, for the international community not only to renew its pledges to the ideals of the Organization but also to give special attention to the question of intolerance, through the proclamation of 1995 as the United Nations Year for Tolerance.

Bangladesh firmly believes that global tolerance is absolutely essential for the establishment and maintenance of world peace and prosperity for all. Governments have the primary responsibility for securing social tolerance, by promoting and protecting human rights for all, banning and punishing hate crimes and discrimination against all people, especially vulnerable groups, and ensuring equal access to justice and equal opportunity for all. Bangladesh is proud to promote congeniality and harmony within its own society, where all its people coexist peacefully.

The United Nations Year for Tolerance was proclaimed with several goals in mind. Greater attention was to be devoted to human rights education and creating climates of mutual tolerance. Serious violations of human rights around the world were to be met with swift action to reprimand their perpetrators and prevent further violations.

Several other initiatives were taken to reinforce the Year for Tolerance. A revised Programme of Action for the Third Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was adopted. The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education was proclaimed. A short-term programme of activities to commemorate the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People was also adopted.

While these initiatives in themselves can be considered partial successes in that they serve to call for greater attention to be given to intolerance worldwide, much yet remains to be done. Despite the promise of these many and wide-ranging initiatives, no real, visible progress has been made at the overall international level.

Indeed, conditions in many areas around the world have deteriorated. The recent conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda attest to this. In these situations, tolerance can be seen to have deteriorated in practically all its aspects. Racial, ethnic and religious minorities continue to suffer persecution. Refugees are increasingly denied asylum. Women and children, especially, face extraordinary circumstances.

Intolerance continues to disrespect diversity and refuses recognition of our common humanity. In many areas around the globe, more violent and contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance have appeared. On an encouraging note, some Governments have acted to eliminate racism, despite the challenging economic and social environment which they often face in implementing measures to combat intolerance.

On a sadder note, the recent world economic crisis has worsened the problem of intolerance around the globe. The developing countries have been especially hard hit, and yet must continue to meet the challenge of intolerance, which often seems insurmountable without the necessary economic and social development which serves to catalyze and ensure the attainment of equal rights and respect for all.

It is for these reasons that Bangladesh renews the call on the United Nations system, including specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations to consider in their respective forums and to take all measures to work towards the final attainment of the goals of the Year for Tolerance. Governments, which have the primary responsibility, and the international community must work together to ensure that the ideal and ultimate goal of tolerance are achieved at all levels.

With this commemorative plenary meeting of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly and the coming to an end of 1995, the United Nations Year for Tolerance, we cannot allow the challenge of intolerance to go unmet. We must continue our efforts in the future, going above and beyond the progress made thus far. As long as the pervasive problem of intolerance continues to afflict populations around the world, the message of the Year must carry on, with a view to achieving equal rights and respect for all.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Malta.

Mr. Cassar (Malta): Malta associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

Tolerance is the sound foundation of civil coexistence within and amongst societies. It is a basic element in the building of peace. The Charter established the practice of tolerance as a principle to be applied in the attainment of the ends pursued by the United Nations in preventing war and maintaining peace. Yet for more than 40 years intolerance was the hallmark of the cold war. It was the peoples' will for liberty and democracy that finally pulled down the walls of resistance to the practice of tolerance, enabling the world community to register great strides towards the desired objective of global security and understanding.

Since the end of the cold war, cooperation and solidarity have become key words in many political commitments entered into by States. Both concepts rest on the notion of tolerance. The Charter establishes an important and immediate link between the cooperation necessary in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and the promotion and encouragement of and respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. Yet, while we commemorate the United Nations Year for Tolerance in this Hall, different forms of intolerance still claim victims in many parts of the world. Intolerance breeds violence. Together or alone, intolerance and its direct result, violence, are spreading to an alarming degree. No sooner had bloc confrontation and tension decreased than the international community started to face a dramatic increase of tension and conflict based on ethnic, racial, religious or national prejudice - tension which thrived on rekindling or reviving animosities that had been extinguished or dormant for many, many years.

This calls for renewed and concerted commitment. Irresponsible political action which nurtures and consolidates itself on past or existing elements of prejudice can be combated only by a unified engagement to eliminate intolerance as witnessed in our day. Since prejudice denotes an irrational, unfavourable or hostile attitude towards members of other racial, religious or ethnic groups, we must, if we truly desire its defeat, engage ourselves in promoting, enhancing and defending the universal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Since a distinguishing characteristic of intolerance is that it reflects and perpetuates tensions and feelings, with wilful disregard for realities, we must act in unison, together with the appropriate United Nations agencies, to combat generalizations about persons or groups against which prejudice is directed. Since ethnic, political and religious prejudice is normally directed at minorities, we have to ensure the strengthening of those international mechanisms which monitor the status of enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by people

belonging to minorities. We must continue to develop early-warning systems. The actions undertaken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and those in our region undertaken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities, are of maximum importance and require our constant support.

Intolerance has often led to bitter conflicts, some of which lasted for prolonged periods, with devastating and tragic results. It still does in our day. The horror unleashed in many areas of the former Yugoslavia continues to haunt us. Malta, like the rest of the international community, hopes that the most recent initiatives to resolve this conflict will have the desired positive results and that tolerance may dawn again on those to whom it has been cruelly denied.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim self-government Arrangements on 13 September 1993 between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel, and the ensuing implementation agreements, the last of which was the interim agreement of 28 September 1995, are inspiring landmarks in the quest for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in a manner which is just and long-lasting. Peace in the Middle East, as in other areas, and tolerance have a reciprocal dependency. Intolerance has burdened the region with a heavy toll of victims. Now it has claimed the life of one of the initiators of and principal actors in the peace process, the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. That tragic event saddens us and rightly generates abhorrence towards terrorism. It should not discourage us in our search for peace based on tolerance.

We are often reminded that the world community has become a global village. Social, economic and political developments in many regions have stimulated and brought about a movement of peoples unprecedented in the history of mankind. Prolonged contact between peoples of different religions, cultures and ethnicity can erode intolerance. It need not lead to a loss of identity. It can lead to the gradual disappearance of prejudice if cultural diversity is acknowledged as the asset it is, rather than feared and abandoned, to be exploited by irresponsible political action.

Governments and non-governmental organizations have a primary role and responsibility in enhancing tolerance for the opinions and identity of others whilst promoting public policies, views and opinions. The importance of education in ensuring tolerance in all its forms must be stressed. The increase in the number of acts of violence, intimidation and coercion triggered by extremism of whatever kind now threatens the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by millions world wide. It constitutes an act of defiance to the very basis of the rule of law and tolerance. We must continue to enhance our cooperation to overcome this threat. But we must also commit ourselves in our own countries to instilling respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others at all levels of society. Within the family, in our schools, in the work environment and in the political arena we must nurture a culture that treasures the rights of others.

In our age of global communications, the international media have as crucial a responsibility as their local counterparts to ensure that the messages they carry, relay and transmit do not bear within them the violent seed of intolerance.

We have ventured into an era of greater tolerance among States. May this new international environment of respect and cooperation inspire us in promoting and reinforcing tolerance within States to contain and overcome all forms of prejudice.

The Acting President: I call next on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Ordzhonikidze (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The theme of the Year proclaimed by the General Assembly was by no means chosen randomly. When Member States adopted the Charter of the United Nations 50 years ago, they solemnly declared that they were determined

> "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours".

Today, during the Organization's fiftieth-anniversary year, we can say with confidence that the United Nations has been able in a relatively short time not only to propound norms of international law in the field of human rights but also to establish implementation machinery to monitor compliance by States of their commitments under human rights agreements.

Mr. Ould Ely (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

No less important is the range of moral and political obligations assumed by States through United Nations declarations and resolutions. The goal of consistent implementation of those instruments is to prevent

situations that could lead to conflict and to reduce tension with respect to the observance of human rights.

Unfortunately, however, the history of the last few years has shown that in and of themselves the fall of totalitarian regimes and the transition to democracy do not create a climate of peace, stability and security. The rising tide of intolerance, violence, and political, religious and nationalist extremism is washing over whole regions of the globe. We are particularly worried that new, sophisticated forms of discrimination have emerged side by side with those "traditional" kinds of discrimination. These include so-called hidden discrimination, where arbitrary treatment and lawlessness with respect to ethnic minorities is presented as "historical justice" and raised to the level of law. Examples include measures by States to deprive a segment of their own populations of the right to citizenship in order on that basis to restrict access to State administration and to appointment in the civil service, to limit the right to form associations and engage in negotiations, to reduce the social benefits and pensions due these people, and to discriminate in the areas of the privatization of housing and many other aspects of day to day life, including freedom of movement.

The world situation over the past year — proclaimed by the General Assembly as the United Nations Year for Tolerance — has grown no more tranquil. But certain trends enable us to say that the efforts of the international community to create a climate of tolerance have not been in vain. The momentum of the Middle East peace process has been preserved; the parties to the conflict in the territory of the former Yugoslavia are engaged in difficult negotiations on how to live in peace after the war; there has been progress on the repatriation of refugees.

From our point of view, this all gives reason to hope that in the future too a tolerant attitude towards both domestic and international opponents will lay the foundations of a search for mutually acceptable compromises, for the sake of peace and security. Dialogue continues to gain acceptance as the means towards mutually acceptable decisions among the most diverse protagonists: States with differing ways of life; ethnic, religious or linguistic groups; or political parties and movements within a country.

The United Nations Year for Tolerance, the conclusion of which we mark today, is notable for other achievements as well, those of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). As members know, UNESCO has adopted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. The content of the Declaration is nothing new for Members of the United Nations; what is new is that on behalf of, and at the request of the international community, the Declaration brings together for the first time the concepts set out by the United Nations on the broader theme of tolerance. In that context, the Declaration is aimed not so much at achieving perfection in relations between States as addressing current or potential parties to conflict at the domestic level. We can already attest to the resulting strengthening of international peace and security.

I wish to recall that Russia participated actively in the drafting of the Declaration. An international seminar on issues of tolerance was held at Yakutsk in June 1995 and was among the forums that contributed many constructive ideas to the drafting of the Declaration. We also helped draft the text within UNESCO itself. Beyond its universal approach, the new Declaration contains one fundamental idea: that tolerance must be viewed not as an end-of-century doctrine of plenary forgiveness of sins, but rather as a way to instil universal standards in the sphere of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to promote equality and non-discriminatory relations in a non-violent struggle of ideas.

In this process we wished also to emphasize our view that the principles of tolerance cannot and must not be viewed as a passive guarantee of the ideals of peace and democracy for those who sow enmity, fan hatred and issue calls to violence. Those principles must constitute guidelines for action by the mass media and for State systems, educational systems, non-governmental organizations and political parties. Violation of these principles must not only be condemned; in specific cases it must be put to an end through the authority of the international community and the powers of the law enforcement agencies of the States in question.

The principles of tolerance are of particular importance for multi-national States. Given today's democratization and the development of pluralism of opinion, many political parties and movements are in operation in these States. Diverse peoples and ethnic groups live in their territories, and the population at large profess a wide range of religions. It is precisely for these people, who reflect, like a drop of water, the problems of the international community, that the concept of tolerance and equality is not just of theoretical significance but must be practised in all spheres of life, including social relations, the means of building State structures, and the management of domestic policy.

The situations to which destabilizing processes can lead in these States are clearly exemplified in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, where society has slipped into the abyss of humanitarian collapse. The peoples of these States need the international community's help — urgently, in some cases — in such spheres as the formulation of programmes to overcome and counteract xenophobia and extremism, recommendations on preventing the use of the mass media by extremist groups to stir up violence, protection against terrorism, the strengthening of the rule of law, and the development of public information activities on human rights.

In situations involving radical changes in political systems, it is extremely important that States themselves should be able to respect the norms of tolerant political behaviour, in which their accountability to all citizens and laws is maintained.

In this complex era, the dangers of inter-bloc tension have been replaced by the danger of the destabilization of social systems resulting from internal influences. It is precisely internal conflicts in States that now represent the major challenge to global security. But internal dissension is perfectly natural in any society. The only situations that can be regarded as unnatural are those that the parties involved are determined to resolve through violence, discrimination and recourse to arms. The principles of tolerance run counter to these trends, and we agree to the development of those principles in cooperation with the widest possible international circles.

In conclusion, I should like to express our conviction that the ideas put forward during the United Nations Year for Tolerance will be embodied in new initiatives in the interest of peace, progress and social development. In this connection, the proclamation of a decade for tolerance could facilitate not only the development of these ideas, but also the coordination of various United Nations strategies to advance the principles of tolerance. It only remains for us on the threshold of the third millennium, to reaffirm our interest in achieving these objectives and to pool our efforts to that end.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly has heard the last speaker on the list for this special commemorative meeting to mark the United Nations Year for Tolerance.

I now call on the representative of Nigeria, who wishes to make a statement in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention, and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria): During our celebration today of the International Year for Tolerance, as an occasion to reflect on how far we have jointly and individually promoted the virtues of tolerance in our respective States, the presidency of the European Union and the representative of the United States of America, regrettably and negatively, have dragged the name of Nigeria into the discussion.

The Nigerian delegation thought of refraining from reacting to the campaign of the European Union, as a mark of its respect for this solemn commemorative ceremony. However, with the statement of the United States, among others, we feel it necessary to seize this opportunity to inform Member States and the international community of the true position with reference to the trial and conviction of the nine Nigerians, including Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa.

Fifteen Nigerians, including Mr. Saro-Wiwa, were charged with the murder of four other Nigerians. They were all tried in open court and were duly represented by legal counsel. Nine of them were found guilty of murder, while the remaining six were acquitted and discharged.

Nigeria, like many other States Members of this Organization, still has capital punishment on its statute books for cases of murder. Consequently, the sentences of those found guilty were carried out in accordance with the existing law. In short, Nigeria observed due process, in line with the laws of the country and within the framework of its constitution.

For the European Union and the United States to accuse Nigeria of violating the rights of those found guilty of murder is totally out of tune with the facts of the case.

We must avoid turning this commemorative occasion into a session of controversy and acrimony. Rather, we should use it to promote the values of tolerance, which are essential for the maintenance of a peaceful world. Nigeria pledges its full support for that endeavour and reiterates its commitment to its obligations under the Conventions to which it is a party.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 112.

Agenda item 31

Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/496)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.21)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.21.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As Egypt is the Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of November, I have the honour of introducing draft resolution A/50/L.21 on the question of cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

The existing ties between the United Nations and the League of Arab States are the concrete manifestation of the desired cooperation and complementarity between the international Organization and regional organizations. The relationship between the two organizations, one international and the other regional, rests on the solid foundation of the principles and purposes of their two respective charters and works in favour of the shared concern that accords the highest priority to the issues of international peace and security.

The General Assembly has continued to underscore, in successive resolutions, the importance of close cooperation between the United Nations and its specialized agencies, on the one hand, and the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations on the other. The aim has been to provide the necessary support to the League's efforts in the area of advancing and developing the economic and social growth of its Member States through cooperation with international institutions. This cooperation has continued in various areas, especially after the adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session of the consensus resolution on cooperation between the two organizations.

There can be no doubt that the League of Arab States has played an outstanding role in seeking a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. So, too, has the United Nations played a principal role in laying the foundations of peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Here, I should like to welcome the latest Palestinian-Israeli agreement signed in Washington on 28 September 1995, under which autonomy will extend to the West Bank. I also find it necessary to voice anew the hope that the Middle East peace process will lead to a comprehensive, lasting and just peace that would guarantee the legitimate rights of all the parties concerned, and that the Palestinian people will exercise its legitimate national rights on all its national soil, including Al-Quds.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution before us notes the desire of both organizations to consolidate, develop and enhance further the ties existing between them in all fields. The draft resolution also expresses the conviction that the maintenance and further strengthening of cooperation between the two organizations contribute to the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

In its operative part, the draft resolution takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General and expresses appreciation to him for the follow-up action he has taken in implementing the proposals adopted at the meetings between the representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations, including most recently the meeting held at Vienna in 1995.

Elsewhere in the draft resolution's operative part, the Secretary-General is requested to continue to deploy his efforts towards strengthening cooperation and coordination between the two organizations and their specialized agencies in order for the two organizations to enhance their capacity to serve their mutual interests in the political, economic, social, humanitarian, cultural and administrative fields. In pursuance of this goal, operative paragraph 11 recommends the convening of a general meeting between the United Nations system and the League of Arab States once every two years, and that inter-agency sectoral meetings should be organized regularly on areas of priority and wide importance in the development of the Arab States.

At this crucial time for the Middle East — a region currently undergoing an historic transformation in relations between States on the basis of a just peace and regional cooperation in all fields — the support extended to the League of Arab States must continue to be a noble objective of the United Nations and should enjoy the full

support of all Member States. Therefore, the draft resolution before us today should be adopted by consensus as a text that serves the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 477 (V) of 1 November 1950, I now call on the observer for the League of Arab States.

Mr. Aboul-Nasr (League of Arab States) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States dates back to 1950, when the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to invite the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to attend sessions of the General Assembly as an observer. This relationship has developed over the years, and the fields of cooperation and coordination between the two organizations have increased to embrace the strengthening of international peace and security and decolonization as well as issues of disarmament and of economic, social and cultural development.

As is well known, in keeping with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly over the past few years, a series of important meetings have been held between the two organizations and their specialized agencies with a view to coordinating and enhancing the cooperation between them in numerous areas. A cooperation agreement concluded between the two organizations in 1989 called on the two organizations to strive for further effective coordination in implementing programmes in the various areas of mutual interest. The agreement also called for continued consultations and exchange of representatives. In addition, further cooperation agreements were concluded in various fields between the bodies and agencies of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States.

This year, on the occasion of commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of both organizations, the ties between the United Nations and the League of Arab States — the oldest between the international Organization and any regional organization — have been consolidated. A general meeting on cooperation was held in July 1995 at Vienna and was attended by the representatives of both organizations and their specialized agencies. The conclusions of this meeting are contained in part IV of the Secretary-General's report in document A/50/496.

The agenda of the latest meeting between the two organizations included a number of issues of paramount importance, including political questions, such as the maintenance of international peace and security; humanitarian issues, such as mine clearance; and such economic and social issues as desertification control, protection of the environment, sustainable development, narcotics control and crime prevention.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the results of the meeting were positive and encouraging. They reaffirmed the complementarity of both organizations. At the meeting, the League of Arab States reiterated its firm commitment to the promotion of United Nations efforts to achieve the purposes of the Charter, including those relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of fundamental freedoms and the exercise of the right of self-determination. The meeting also stressed the importance of preventive diplomacy as an effective means of easing political tensions. It called for the prior consultation and coordination with the regional organizations concerning crisis prevention. At the meeting, attention was drawn to the importance of addressing certain issues, such as those of disarmament, through a comprehensive approach that encompasses all States. There was also an exchange of views concerning cooperation in turning the Middle East region into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, and the importance of achieving the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by the accession of all States to the Treaty.

The many changes now taking place on the international political scene in regional and international relations have increased the United Nations responsibilities with regard to resolving many problems, especially those relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this regard, I wish to pay tribute to the efforts of the United Nations and its Secretary-General in seeking peaceful solutions to such problems. I wish to reaffirm the keenness of the League of Arab States to cooperate with the Secretary-General with the aim of promoting the role of the United Nations in establishing peace on the foundations of justice and the resolutions of international legality, especially in our Arab region.

In this respect, I wish to refer to one of the forms of consultation and cooperation that exist between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in seeking peaceful solutions to certain disputes in our area. I wish

to focus here on the meeting arranged by the League of Arab States in Cairo, in February 1995 on Somalia, in which the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), participated. A representative of the United Nations Secretary-General attended the meeting and stressed the importance of intensifying joint efforts and of continuing constructive consultation with the aim of helping Somalia achieve national reconciliation.

The Palestinian question and the problem of the Middle East still occupy a major place in the concerns of the League of Arab States. While we welcome the steps that have been taken so far towards peaceful settlement, yet we look forward to the completion of what has been achieved to this date, on all tracks, in order for a just, durable and comprehensive peace to be established in our area — peace that would be founded on the principles laid down by the international Organization — peace that would be built on the principles of justice, equality and respect for the resolutions of international legality, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and the principle of land for peace. This is the peace which we hope will turn a new leaf in the history of the Middle East.

Chapter III of the Secretary-General's report (A/50/496) deals with the cooperation in the sectoral areas between the United Nations, the League of Arab States and their specialized agencies, especially in the areas of economic, social and cultural development. It gives me pleasure to refer here to the conclusions of the recent meeting of the two organizations that underlined the continuation of cooperation in the sectoral areas, as contained in General Assembly resolution 49/14 adopted at the last session.

The meeting also dealt with a number of development programmes of importance to the Arab countries that require cooperation between the two organizations and their specialized agencies in the next period — that is, energy, rural development, desertification, green belts, vocational training, technology, environment and information and documentation.

I seize this opportunity to invite the United Nations and its specialized agencies to increase cooperation with bodies of the Arab League concerned in implementing the development programmes relating to these sectoral areas in our Arab region.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the continuing support by the Arab League for the goals and the principles of the United Nations. We wish the United Nations every success in meeting the challenges that face it. We shall spare no effort in promoting cooperation with it in the interests of building a better world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now consider draft resolution A/50/L.21.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt this draft resolution without a vote?

Draft resolution A/50/L.21 was adopted (resolution 50/16).

The Acting President (interpretation from French): I shall now call on representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote on position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Rubinstein (Israel): The delegation of Israel joined the consensus on the draft resolution just adopted. In so doing, we were guided by our desire to make peace with all of our neighbours, who are all members of the League of Arab States. Israel joined the consensus on this item in the last two years as well. During the past year, significant progress has been made in the peace process: the Interim Agreement was signed by Israel and the Palestinians, and the peace which was established one year ago with Jordan has begun to develop and prosper. Progress has also been made in the multilateral negotiations within the various working groups. We hope that in the coming year continued progress will be achieved with the other parties to the bilateral negotiations as well.

Peace and economic cooperation are intimately linked. Just as we are committed to peace, we are equally committed to strengthening regional economic ties. We have been encouraged by some steps taken to lift economic boycotts, such as last year's decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council to lift the secondary and tertiary boycott against Israel. We had hoped that these positive developments would find expression in the framework of the League of Arab States. However, as

yet they have not. The time has come for the members of the League to take further measures so as to eliminate their boycott against Israel altogether. As a first step in this direction, the League of Arab States could adopt the decision taken by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Just last month, the second Middle East/North African Economic Summit was held in Amman, Jordan, under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein. The goals of the Summit, as outlined in the Amman Declaration, were to facilitate the expansion of private-sector investment in the region, to cement the public-private partnership which will ensure the attainment of that end, and to work to enhance regional cooperation and development. Business leaders from Israel, many Arab States and Muslim States from outside the region concluded a number of deals at the Summit that will help augment the productive capacity of the region and contribute to its broad-based economic development. In addition, Government representatives agreed to establish a bank for economic cooperation and development in the Middle East and North Africa, in Cairo. Also, Cairo was selected to host next year's Economic Summit.

Israel supports the cooperation between the United Nations and various regional organizations, including the League of Arab States. Indeed, this cooperation is based on provisions of the United Nations Charter. In this context, it is regrettable that Israel still does not belong to a regional group at the United Nations due to the political objections of some Member States. Israel calls upon the members of the League of Arab States to lift their objections to the admission of Israel to the Asian Group. The fact that Israel is currently denied membership in any regional group stands in direct contradiction to the basic principle of the universality of the United Nations.

This is the first resolution adopted by the fiftieth session of the General Assembly on an issue related to the Middle East. We are pleased that the resolution was adopted by consensus and hope that more resolutions relating to the region will be adopted in the same way. However, in order to ensure that this happens, all parties should exercise restraint and refrain from submitting draft resolutions that one side in the peace negotiations will find impossible to support.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 31?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 32

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/573)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.22)

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: I call on the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.22.

Mr. Zahid (Morocco) *(interpretation from French)*: It is an honour and a privilege for Morocco, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to introduce under item 32 of the agenda of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference", the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.22.

May I first of all express my sincere congratulations to the Secretary-General for the excellent and instructive report (A/50/573) he has presented to us under this agenda item. The report, dated 17 October 1995, gives a detailed account of the state of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as requested by the General Assembly in resolution 49/15 of 25 November 1994.

Since the Secretary-General's last report, many activities have been undertaken in the context of this cooperation between the United Nations and the OIC. We can cite as examples the participation of the United Nations and the representative of the Secretary-General at the last Summit meeting, held in Casablanca.

Furthermore, in this context, a coordination meeting of the focal points of the lead agencies of the United Nations system and the OIC was held in Geneva from 19 to 21 June 1995. During that meeting the nine priority areas were studied and relevant agreements were concluded.

The draft resolution I have the honour to introduce today reflects all these developments and is aimed at strengthening this cooperation.

First of all, the draft resolution stresses once again the need to further strengthen the ties of cooperation between the two Organizations in the various areas of common interest. It takes note of the determination of the United Nations and the OIC to strengthen cooperation between them and welcomes the results of the coordination meeting held at Geneva from 19 to 21 June 1995.

In the operative part of the draft resolution, the Assembly notes with satisfaction the active participation of the OIC in the various activities of the United Nations and requests the two Organizations to continue their cooperation, particularly in the political sphere. The General Assembly also encourages the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to continue their cooperation with the OIC in the interests of peace, security and development.

The draft resolution also expresses the Assembly's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his efforts to strengthen this cooperation and recommends the holding of periodic coordination meetings between representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations system and the OIC and its specialized institutions to consider means to ensure the continuation and strengthening of cooperation.

Finally, the General Assembly asks the Secretary-General to report to it on the state of cooperation between the two Organizations at its fifty-first session.

We hope that this draft resolution will receive the support of all members of the Assembly. This will without any doubt contribute to the realization of new progress in the area of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: In accordance with resolution 3369 (XXX), adopted on 10 October 1975, I call on the Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): I have the privilege of addressing the General Assembly in the middle of its fiftieth-anniversary session. This is a memorable experience, especially since this session coincides with the twenty-fifth-anniversary year of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the intergovernmental Organization of 51 Islamic States and four observer States which I have the honour to serve and represent here today.

On behalf of the general secretariat of the OIC, I wish to speak on agenda item 32, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference".

At the outset, I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President and his colleagues in the Bureau on their election to their high offices. At the same time, I wish to join other delegations in paying a richly deserved tribute to His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy of Cote d'Ivoire, the President at the last session, and the other members of the outgoing Bureau for steering the work of the General Assembly so successfully throughout its forty-ninth session.

In our assessment, the report (A/50/573) of the Secretary-General which is before us provides a useful analysis of and informative perspective on the status of cooperation between our two Organizations and between our respective specialized agencies and institutions in many areas of common interest in the year 1995. It amply reflects the leadership of His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in directing the United Nations system in the implementation of resolution 49/15 of 25 November 1994, which called for continued cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in their common search for solutions to global problems relating to international peace and security, disarmament, self-determination, decolonization, fundamental human rights, economic development and technical cooperation. I should like to seize this opportunity to convey to the President of the General Assembly — and, through him, to the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the various United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies — the satisfaction and sincere thanks of the Secretary-General of the OIC, Mr. Hamid Algabid, and of the executive heads of our several specialized and affiliated institutions for their unstinting cooperation in pursuing this common endeavour with success throughout the past year.

It was particularly encouraging to note that besides continuing to expand our mutual cooperation in several economic, social and humanitarian sectors, which goes back about 20 years, serious impetus has been given to the aspect of the Assembly's resolution 49/15 which called for strengthening cooperation between our two Organizations in the political field. This is indeed timely,

and it is responsive to some of the priority concerns of our member States, all of which, are also Members of the United Nations and are represented here today. In saying this, I have in mind the preoccupation of our two Organizations with some serious political issues being faced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Palestine, Jammu and Kashmir, Tajikistan, Cyprus, Somalia and other places that are enduring the effects of formidable human conflicts.

The report of the Secretary-General includes, among other things, the recommendations of the meeting of the focal points of the lead agencies of the United Nations system and of the OIC system, held in Geneva in June this year to review the progress in the implementation of our programmes of cooperation in nine ongoing mutually identified priority areas: the development of science and technology; trade and development; technical cooperation; assistance to refugees; food security and agriculture; education and eradication of illiteracy; investment mechanisms and joint ventures; human resources development; and environment. The eight recommendations flowing from that review, which are included in the report of the Secretary-General, are self-explanatory and merit our collective support. I shall, however, take the liberty of commenting upon two of them, as they appear to be central to the success of these cooperative endeavours.

I shall first comment on the recommendation made in paragraph 15(c) requiring our cooperation to be concentrated as much as possible in the implementation of those priority programmes and projects that have already been approved by the respective governing bodies, with the corresponding resources having been earmarked for the biennium. This is a prudent recommendation, for once the objectives and validity of the programmes have been determined and financing has been secured, the comparative advantage of joint United Nations/OIC activity in the formulation and implementation of the approved programmes, utilizing the inputs that can be mobilized from our member States would justify our cooperation. This would avoid uncertainty about the availability of additional resources and utilize the established programming framework, which would save time and effort and curtail the risks of duplicating the process. For these reasons we would wholeheartedly support this recommendation. The recommendation made in paragraph 15(e), which compliments the one I have just commented upon, also has our strong support.

At this stage in my statement I should like to refer to the annual coordination meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the OIC, held here on 3 October 1995 to discuss the agenda of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly — especially those items that were of interest or concern to the OIC.

I should also like to report on the successful meeting of the Secretaries-General of our two Organizations, which took place here on 4 October 1995, the day following the annual coordination meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, to exchange views on important issues of interest to both Organizations. This was followed by a senior officials meeting of the secretariats of the two Organizations in which the OIC delegation was led by its Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, while the United Nations Secretariat's delegation was headed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. At that meeting the principles and modalities of cooperation between the two Organizations in fields of common interest were examined in detail and depth, including legislative and administrative aspects and, especially, the financial implications that those entailed. In the interest of fostering better understanding, and with a view to identifying and tackling unforeseen impediments to our cooperation in a timely manner, it was agreed that closer contacts and more regular meetings between the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and the Permanent Observer Mission of the OIC would henceforth be effected. I am happy to report and put on record that these meetings, the most recent of which was held here at Headquarters only this morning, are indeed proving to be very fruitful. The importance attributed by the OIC to cooperation with the United Nations was also reiterated in no uncertain terms by the OIC Secretary-General, when Mr. Algabid addressed the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly last month on the occasion of the United Nations fiftieth anniversary.

The Deputy Permanent Representative of Morocco, acting in his capacity as representative of the Chairman of the Islamic Group, has eloquently introduced the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which is before the Assembly in document A/50/L.22, dated 16 November 1995. I would like to take the liberty of drawing representatives' attention briefly to three of the 16 operative paragraphs it contains, because of their significance.

First, I wish to refer to operative paragraph 6, concerning the strengthening of cooperation between our two Organizations in the political field, which I referred to a little while ago.

Secondly, I wish to refer to operative paragraph 9, which urges the organizations of the United Nations System, especially the lead agencies — the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) — to provide increased technical and other assistance to the OIC and its specialized agencies in order to enhance cooperation. Such assistance has turned out to be mutually useful, and the experience now calls for an intensification of this exercise.

Thirdly, I wish to refer to operative paragraph 13, which, on the basis of past experience, makes a very pertinent and cost-effective recommendation. It calls for a change in the timetable of our meetings so that the coordination meetings of the focal points of the two Organizations are held concurrently with the general meeting of the two secretariats and not in alternate years, as is being done now.

Recognizing that none of the operative paragraphs contained in the draft resolution involves any additional financial implications, I am confident that it will have the unanimous approval of the membership of the General Assembly.

In my final words, I would like to reiterate what I stated before this Assembly at its forty-ninth session: the OIC derives its inspiration from the eternal and noble message of Islam, and its foundations are predicated on the principles of peace, harmony, tolerance, equality and justice for all. Our cooperation with the United Nations in the service of our common member States will be guided by these principles as we continue our collective journey to peace, prosperity and progress.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/50/L.22.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/50/L.22 without a vote?

Draft resolution A/50/L.22 was adopted (resolution 50/17).

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.